

Utah's past preserved in photo

By JOSEPHINE ZIMMERMAN
The Daily Herald

Two granddaughters of pioneer photographer George Edward Anderson believe his classic pictures of local and historic scenes should be made available to the public for next year's pioneer sesquicentennial celebration.

About 30,000 of Anderson's glass plate negatives have been preserved over the years, and many of them are now in the possession of Brigham Young University.

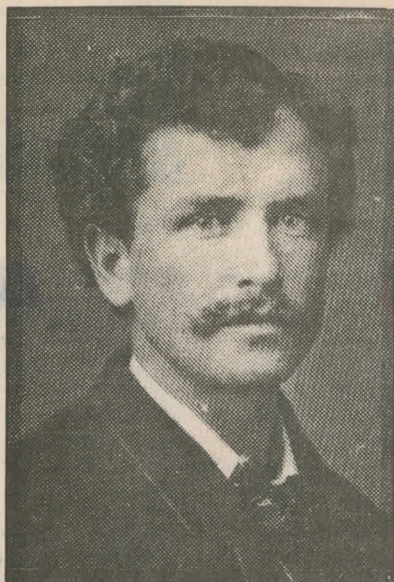
Pam Anderson Nau and Brenda Anderson Blackwell, both of Orem, have been learning about their grandfather who traveled extensively with his "tent gallery," compiling a remarkable record of the life and scenes of the time.

His glass plate photographs are so clear and detailed that many people had difficulty believing that they were not grainy and out of focus, as many early photographs are, according to Rell G. Francis.

A photographer and artist himself, Francis was given a collection of more than 10,000 of Anderson's glass plate negatives by Leo Crandall, Springville. Within a year, Francis had produced an exhibit of more than 150 brown-tone enlargements. He spent seven years cataloging the negatives, and subsequently produced a book containing Anderson's history and 116 of the photographs.

Many of the plates are in possession of the LDS Church Historical Department and the Utah State Historical Society.

In his book, Francis noted that the church historian's office had renumbered, cataloged and micro-



George E. Anderson

filmed most of the Anderson collection, but decided to preserve only the church-related negatives and prints. After microfilming, many of the unwanted plates were broken. Fortunately, cataloger-typist Drucilla Powell Smith rescued the remainder and moved the heavy glass negatives to her home. This was quite a feat because altogether the plates probably weighed several tons.

Over the years, Smith sold nearly 1,000 choice negatives of railway and other subjects to railroad history buffs and gave another 3,000 to a historical society in Price. Those were presented to Brigham Young University. Smith gave the remaining plates (nearly 10,000) to Crandall, who "bequeathed" them to Francis in 1972.

Francis related how, beginning about 1895, Anderson began keep-

ing diaries and journals which he continued to do for nearly 25 years. He described the routines of business, domestic, civic and church duties. He also carefully identified his negatives.

The photographer, usually traveling alone by horse and buggy, took his photographic equipment to often remote Utah villages, taking portraits and shooting scenes. He would set up a tent gallery for his work, but the country people allowed him to use their cellars or kitchens to develop his negatives.

Often he was paid with contributions of food, since collecting money was a problem. Often, he would time his visits to catch the farmers when they had harvested their crops, or to the mining camps on pay day.

He traveled to Scofield to photograph one of the worst mine disasters on May 1, 1900, when nearly 200 miners lost their lives in an explosion at Winter Quarters. His pictures are graphic scenes of mourners and caskets that were distributed to families of the mine victims.

Anderson was also on hand to photograph a bucket brigade dousing a fire in a Mapleton church meeting house.

Making a living with his photography was hard for Anderson, who had a wife and three children to support. Francis notes that he died in near poverty in 1928.

In his book "The Utah Photographs of George Edward Anderson," Francis wrote: "Within 30 years of the time the first Mormons settled in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, George Ed Anderson set

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otographer's work



Photo Courtesy of The Anderson Sisters

One of Utah's earliest photojournalists, George E. Anderson, added to historical documentation with this portrait of the Utah Statehood Queen, Tillie Houtz. This picture was developed from the original glass-plate negative, which is 100 years old.

PHOTOS:

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out to photograph all he could see of his land and of his church. In his portable tent gallery, in front yards, on the steps of boxcar homes, and in his studio in Springville, he made thousands of portraits. He documented the building of Mormon temples, the civic celebrations of growing towns, the advances of the railroads and of industry.

"Anderson photographed railroads, miners, tradesmen, and farmers at work, and pioneers at rest. Whether his subject was an old Indian fighter or a gandy dancer, Anderson captured the dignity of men and women who had made a home in the West.

"Always his images are sharp, and the most circumstantial details — buggy whips, washing machines, flowered hats and long skirts, watch chains and tin cups, the bric-a-brac on a fine stone house, three boys's pet snakes — evoke a world that is gone."

Eva Maeser Crandall declared in a tribute at his funeral, "The ground he traveled was hallowed to him. I can almost hear him say, 'I must have a picture of this sacred spot. ... when I return all will be changed. Some of these old landmarks will be obliterated. Who will see them as I see them now?'"

The Anderson sisters want to reproduce a variety of pictures, primarily those of human interest, for the upcoming sesquicentennial.

"The hardest decision is which to use," said Nau.

They have received permission from BYU to use some of the negatives, and they hope to produce them as framed art works, enlarged photos encased in plastic, as postcards or even greeting cards.

Currently, they have contacts with Deseret Book and with the Frame Works for marketing, but they will be handling the reproductions themselves.

BYU filming brings out the of early LDS historical paint

By Laurie Williams Sowby
Deseret News correspondent

PROVO — As an undergraduate student at Brigham Young University, Robert L. Marshall admired the folk art paintings of pioneer artist C.C.A. Christensen, displayed in the Harris Fine Arts Center.

Now, 20 years later, he has captured some of the history and artistry of the Danish immigrant in a film that had its premiere during the BYU art faculty's exhibit last week.

"C.C.A. Christensen: Pioneer Folk Artist" takes a look at the art and life of a Latter-day Saint convert who documented events in church history through his primitive style paintings.

Twenty-three 8-by-10-foot canvases of historical scenes were rolled into a continuous panorama that was unfolded before enthusiastic audiences in the late 1800s.

Carl Christian Anton Christensen, a farmer in Sanpete County during the summers and an artist during the winters, painted the scenes after interviewing people who had witnessed the events that were depicted.

"History will preserve much," he wrote, "but art alone can make the narration of the suffering of the Saints comprehensible for the following generations."

Such events as the tarring and feathering of Joseph Smith, his martyrdom, the Mormons' expulsion from Nauvoo, and pioneers entering the Salt Lake Valley are depicted in the collection, which is now displayed in the Museum of Art and History of the LDS Church in Salt Lake City. One painting, that of Joseph Smith's first vision, did not survive the 30 years of performances by the artist and subsequent years of display by his son.

As he traveled around in his wagon with the rolled-up canvas and written narration titled "The Mormon Panorama," Christensen found small-town audiences eager to pay a few eggs or a bag of grain as admission to what was a highly entertaining evening.

And if someone in the audience told him afterward that something in a scene was not historically accurate, he'd go home, scrape it off, and change it to fit the eyewitness recollection.

"C.C.A. was a fervent missionary," Marshall said. "His paintings were just an extension of his missionary spirit."

Marshall, who wrote and directed this film about the artist, sees it in much the same way. "It's a nice legacy — a way to tell the story of Mormonism contemporar-

ily."

The 27-minute "docudrama" is an instructional film intended for art and humanities students. "We wanted to make it visually stimulating as well as historical," Marshall added.

He tapped the expertise of BYU Professor Richard Jensen and LDS history curator Richard Oman for the research aspects and enlisted the help of professional cinematographers, sound technicians and designers over the 1½ years it took to complete the film.

Marshall said that when he first saw Christensen's paintings years ago, he was not aware of the artist's significance. When he noticed an article about Christensen in "Art in America" and learned about an exhibit of his paintings at the Whitney Museum, he became more interested and wanted to make a film about him.

The project started in 1982 with a shooting script. "Because I'm a painter, I guess, I like to work on things

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from the visual end first," said Marshall. "It drives producers crazy." But it was a start.

After being placed on the back burner for a while, the project resumed at full speed last spring with a creative research award from the College of Fine Arts. Instead of teaching painting and drawing, Marshall was able to work full time on the film during spring and summer terms.

For the re-enactment of the panorama presentation in the film, Marshall assembled several of Christensen's descendants, including a granddaughter who had traveled around and played the piano for her grandfather during the presentations.

Also in the crowd, filmed at the Springville Presbyterian Church, are his wife and five of their six children. Marshall appears in another scene, "just for fun."

Playing the role of C.C.A. Christensen is the folk art-

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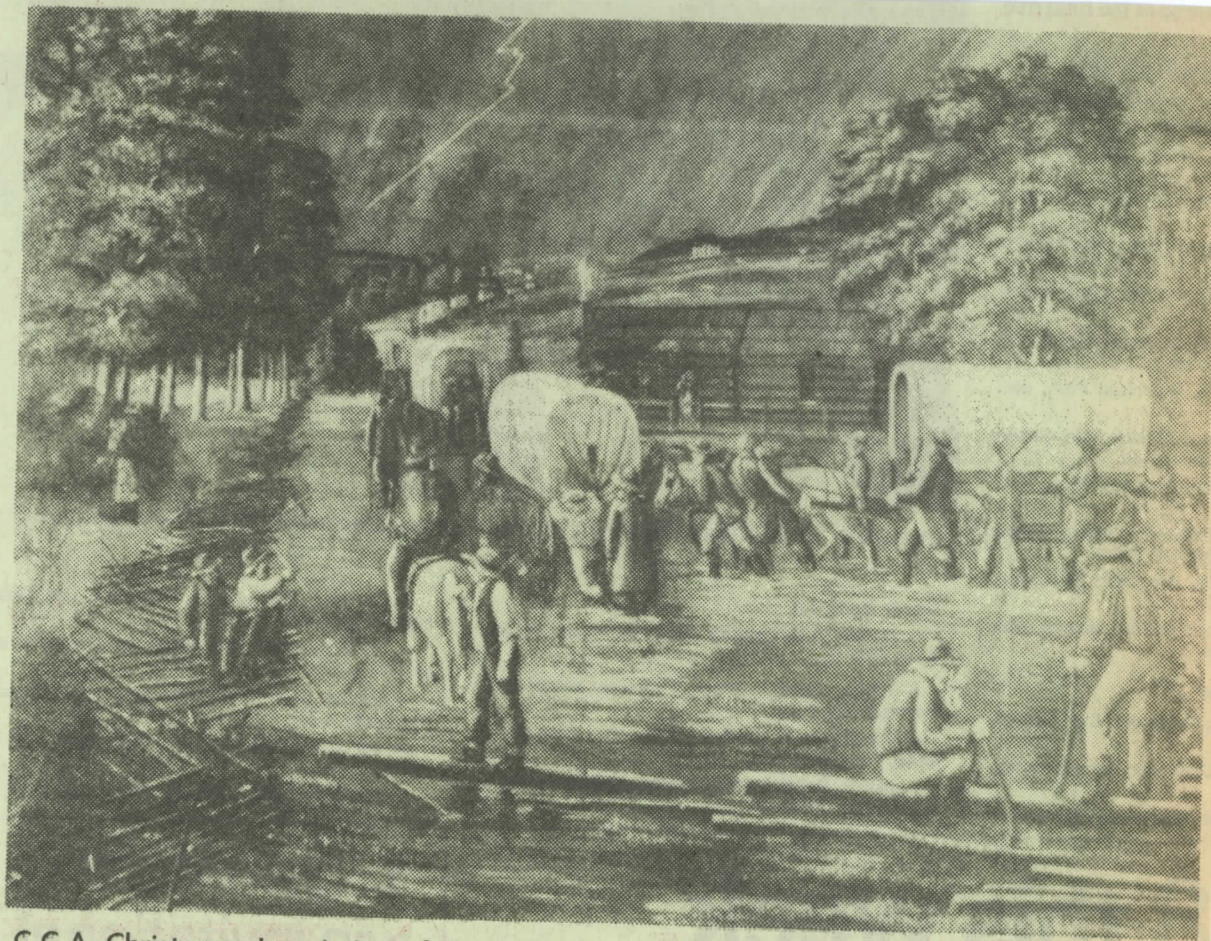
Painting depicts the Mormons' destruction and suffering in Jackson County, Mo.

ist's great-grandson, J. Bruce Christensen of Provo. "We were looking for a man who could not only play the part of C.C.A. Christensen, but also sit in a wagon and make the horses go forward," said Marshall. Marshall's son Todd plays the part of the artist as a young boy.

Marshall had his writing and directing — as well as acting — debut in another film, co-produced with James C. Christensen, also of the art department faculty. "William 'Wild Bill' Billy Board, the Billboard Artist" was about a fellow BYU artist who had gone to Las Vegas to paint billboards.

"It started out as a simple film, but ended up showing our friend sorting out the issues of making a living vs. creating art, a dilemma faced by our students," Marshall said. He and his co-producer appeared rather anonymously in the footage, and it was so much fun, Marshall decided to do it again.

Students are still the main audience for that film, as well as the recent Christensen film. "You always hope your pieces will get wider audiences — be bounced off a satellite — but I'll keep making films just because I like to make them," Marshall said.



C.C.A. Christensen's painting of Zions Camp, traveling from Kirtland to Jackson, Mo.



Painting of Mormon wagon trains crossing frozen Mississippi River is part of 'docudrama.